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Father of U-2 Pilot Is Seeking To Exchange Soviet Spy for Son

Oliver W. Powers, the father of the U-2 pilot being held by the Soviet Union, has written to Col. Rudolf Ivanovitch Abel, convicted Soviet spy, suggesting that he would seek United States permission to exchange the two imprisoned men.

A summary of the contents of Mr. Powers' letter and Abel's reply were released yesterday by James B. Donovan, Abel's court-appointed lawyer, at his office at 161 William Street. Abel is in the Federal Penitentiary at Atlanta, Ga.

Mr. Donovan said Abel had written to Mr. Powers advising him his request should be sent to Abel's family, now reported to be living in East Berlin. The lawyer said both letters were sent to him by Abel. His client also forwarded a request that Mr. Donovan arrange to meet in

Zurich, Switzerland, with a lawyer who represents his family.

Mr. Donovan said he had "communicated with the proper authorities in the United States Government and have stated that I have no objection to such a meeting if the Government authorities it."

He said yesterday afternoon that he had been informed by Washington that he would be notified of the Government's decision within the next few days. He said he had made plans to go to Europe and was leaving today aboard the liner, Nieuw Amsterdam for a combined business and vacation trip with his wife, Mary, and their four children.

He identified the Abel family's lawyer as Wolfgang Vogel of East Berlin. He said that if he had Government permission

he would meet Mr. Vogel later this month.

Since Mr. Powers' son, Francis Gary Powers, was forced down in Soviet territory on a flight to gather information, the father has been seeking to gain his son's release.

Mr. Powers had obtained a United States passport and a Soviet visa. Mr. Powers, a 35-year-old businessman of Peoria, Ill., said he hoped to get to Moscow to see his son in place of any other.

Two weeks ago Mr. Powers said he had been promised "help" by Premier Khrushchev if he went to see his son. The following day, June 1, he decided to postpone a scheduled trip to visit his imprisoned son. A week later word came from Moscow that the Soviet Premier had turned down Mr. Powers' appeal for his son's release.

The letter sent by Mr. Powers to Abel was mailed on June 2. It was turned over to Abel in his cell on June 10.

In his letter Powers offered to approach the State Department and President Eisenhower to exchange Abel for Young Mr. Powers. Mr. Donovan said, "He requested that Abel in turn communicate with Soviet Russia to the same end."

Mr. Donovan said that on June 12 Abel, who is serving a thirty-year prison sentence, advised Powers that he should address his request to his family in East Germany.

At the same time, Abel sent Mr. Powers' letter and his reply along with a covering message to Mr. Donovan.

Abel, who is 57 years old, was the first foreign national ever tried for espionage in

peace by a civilian court in the United States. He was also the highest-ranking foreign agent ever caught in this country.

He was convicted on Oct. 25, 1957, by a jury of nine men and three women who deliberated for three hours and thirty-five minutes after a two-week trial in Brooklyn Federal Court. One of the three counts on which he was found guilty—conspiracy to transmit United States defense and atomic secrets to the Soviet Union—is punishable by death. Judge Mortimer W. Byers sentenced him to prison and a \$3,000 fine.

In pleading for Abel's life, Mr. Donovan had asked the court not to impose the death sentence, arguing that if an American intelligence agent of comparable rank were seized by the Soviet Union he could be exchanged for Abel.

Young Mr. Powers, who is 30

years old, has been held by the Soviet Union since his plane was downed on May 1. He wrote to his wife, Barbara, this week, saying that he could get seven years in prison or the death penalty if he was convicted of flights over the Soviet Union. He urged her to visit him in a Soviet jail and to be with him when he faced trial.

No Comment by U. S.

WASHINGTON, June 10—The State Department had no comment today on the proposed Abel-Powers exchange.

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